



WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'ĀN WALKING WITH THE QUR'ĀN OR WALKING THROUGH THE QUR'ĀN?

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A B S T R A C T

The Qur'ān, for Muslims, is the *Furqān* (Criterion), and as such the Qur'ān should guide Muslims through their life, which means Muslims have to endeavour to walk in the light of the Qur'ān. But for Muslims, the proposition that they should try to walk in the light of the Qur'ān should not be a case of simply following the rules stated by the Qur'ān without internalising them, taking merely following the rules without internalising them as the adequate function of the commitment of faith. Following the rules requires necessary reflection on the situation with the aim of understanding it in order to adequately apply the rules enunciated by the Qur'ān.

This paper puts the matter of walking in the light of the Qur'ān in an entirely different register by arguing that it is primarily a philosophical issue and attempts to draw out some key implications of this view. The paper argues that the primary nature of a Muslim's relationship to the Qur'ān has to be an intellectual one without compromising other forms of this relationship.

Hence, the focus of this paper is on the nature of the relationship one should have with the Qur'ān and not on the belief one should have about the Qur'ān.

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Introduction

It is highly probable that most Muslims will, without equivocation and reservation, commit themselves to the proposition that Muslims should live by the light of the Qur'ān. Yet, though the commitment to this proposition is readily given, it still remains to be asked how much thought has actually gone in trying to understand the full implications of such a commitment. This is fundamentally a philosophical question to which this article will venture to give a philosophical response and in doing so, it will examine the ramifications of such a commitment. What follows is not so much about exegesis of the Qur'ān rather it is concerning the nature of our relationship to it. Therefore, the discussion never makes the various commentaries of the Qur'ān an issue, or refers to any Qur'ān scholar with the sole exception of Sayyid [Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn] Quṭb (1324–1386/1906–1966) who is referred to solely for the purpose of making a sort of historical point. Hence, the essay falls outside the preview of the rich tradition of the Qur'ānic exegesis.

To get the philosophical ball rolling, however, we have to prepare the ground for it to roll on, which entails introducing some philosophical concepts and making clear their meanings. To put it a little differently, it means introducing the philosophical vocabulary in which the issue at hand will be discussed.

A thoughtful response to reflect philosophically on what it is to live by the light of the Qur'ān essentially requires that we first need to acknowledge the great diversity and difference in the life-situations of the Muslims. Life-situation,¹ in short, refers to the situatedness of Muslims in the nexus of time and space, and since the problems and challenges they face are a function of their situatedness, it points to the great diversity of challenges which Muslims face. Since to walk is to walk the path defined by life situation; to walk in the light of the

1. The term life situation can also be termed as existential situation. Of the two, the term life situation is preferred in this paper primarily and solely because it is simpler.